

# The Hit '90s Toy That Terrorized Parents Is Returning to Shelves

Furby, a talking robotic furball, will come with a few changes for a new generation—and their parents



Hasbro is hoping millennials who grew up with Furby will buy one for their children. Credit: HASBRO

*By Joseph Pisani*  
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They terrorized the ears of parents, prompted worries they could take over planes and were banned from an American spy agency for fear they would spill state secrets.

Now Furby, the chatty robotic toy from the late 1990s, is coming back to store shelves.

[Hasbro](#) said it is relaunching the toy for a new generation, hoping millennials who grew up with the furballs will buy them for their children. This time, the new Furbys will come with something the '90s version didn't have: an off switch.

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Ad

“Yes, you can shut Furby off,” promised the [Amazon.com listing](#) for the toy.

Furby became a sensation after hitting stores in 1998. The toys, which came a dozen years before the iPhone was introduced, sang and talked gibberish in a high-pitched voice. They were [hard to find](#) for two Christmases.

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A Walmart manager hands out Furbys to eager shoppers in New Mexico in 1998. Credit: DUANE TINKEY/HOBBS NEWS-SUN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hospitals and airlines at the time had concerns about Furby, fearing it would interfere with medical equipment or flight plans. The Federal Aviation Administration categorized the toys as portable electronic devices, [restricting their use](#) on flights.

Worries that Furby was a recording device led the National Security Agency to ban it. At the Naval Shipyard in Norfolk, Va., personnel were told to take action if they saw the furry robot: “seize it and its owner—this is a security violation.” (The company behind Furby always said the toy wasn’t a recording device.)

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Original Furbys didn't have an off switch on purpose, to mimic real pets. "In real life you just can't turn your cat or dog off and on," an executive for the toy maker [told The Wall Street Journal](#) in 1999.

Furby hasn't really disappeared since its heyday. It was given an update in 2016 and has made appearances in movies. The 2019 Adam Sandler film "Uncut Gems" featured a gold Furby pendant on a gold chain.



The chatty robotic toy has found a second life online.  
Credit: HASBRO

The cuddly bot has had a second life on social media. "There's so much Furby content on TikTok," said Madeleine Buckley, senior editor at review site the Toy Insider. People post videos of themselves powering up their old Furbys on TikTok, where videos with the hashtag #Furby have more than 550 million views.

Toy makers have long brought back toys from the 1970s and '80s, but are now entering a new decade.

"The '90s has officially entered retro territory," said Buckley.

Barney, the purple dinosaur that ruled TV screens in the 1990s, [is re-launching](#) as a cartoon. So is Neopets, a computer game launched in 1999. Earlier this year, American Girl released its latest historical doll: '90s twins from Seattle who wear flannel and whose sold-separately accessories include a desktop computer with floppy disks.

Hasbro said the new Furbys are tweaked for a new generation. They'll have brighter colors, rainbow colored eyes and put on light shows.

"Be my best friend?" the box says.